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ABSTRACT

Selected high school sophomores and juniors at Pomona Senior High School in Arvada, Colorado, are trained in counseling and group communication skills in order to be able to facilitate small peer groups in elective classes. The purpose is to help students find personal meaning in their lives and be more successful in school. An attempt is made to use the growth facilitating conditions developed by Carl Rogers: congruence, empathy, positive regard, and the ability to communicate all three of these. Titles of four books and two audiovisual aids conclude this brief document. (JW)

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A "DO IT YOURSELF KIT" FOR IMPLEMENTING A HIGH SCHOOL PEER COUNSELING PROGRAM IN THREE EASY STEPS!

by John Marsico
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A "DO IT YOURSELF KIT" FOR IMPLEMENTING A HIGH SCHOOL PEER COUNSELING PROGRAM IN THREE EASY STEPS....OR KIDS DO IT BETTER!

INTRODUCTION:

The purpose of the program is to help students make sense of their lives: to find personal meaning - and, as a result, achieve more success in school!

The process at Pomona Senior High School in Jefferson County R-1 involves the training of selected sophomores and juniors in counseling and group facilitation skills for a nine-week period. They, in turn, facilitate small group (six to eight students) elective classes for nine weeks at a time. Peer counselors are at all times closely supervised by the professional counselors.

I. ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT: The first step in developing a Peer Counseling Program is to muster total support from your school's administration. This, obviously easier in some situations than in others. Also, sell the idea to your co-workers, it's lonely to try to do a program by yourself - and much more effective if you can ALL share the credit and/or the blame!

II. PEER COUNSELOR TRAINING: Peer Counselors' training consists of studying and modeling group facilitation skills. Examples: non-judgmental listening, reflecting feelings, linking, observing, and giving feedback. An attempt is made to incorporate the following conditions for facilitating growth set forth by Carl Rogers: Congruence, empathy, positive regard, and the ability to communicate all three of these. The following stages of group process are taught: (The states of group process apply not only to the nine-week blocks, but also to each class session.)

A. Beginning - warm-up, getting acquainted, establishing trust, and developing a process for determining group-approved guidelines. Exercises used, for example, are the "Name Game," the "Trust Walk," the "Think About a Secret" exercise.

B. Middle - this is the time to deal with tasks at hand. It is a good idea at this point to use the feedback model.

C. End - review, wind down, termination, closures and goodbyes. The exercises used here involve processing a period's observations, or the observations over the past term.

III. PEER COUNSELORS WORK WITH GROUPS: A typical group session/class addresses the current needs of the members.

A. The beginning is a time during which each student "checks in" with the group regarding current feelings and/or mood, in a way that is "below the surface," and also has the opportunity to say anything to any member of the group. Sometimes (often) this exercise takes the entire period, or is left unfinished at the end of class.

B. The tasks of the day consume the middle part of the period. This time may be used for a student/s to discuss concerns, or for an exercise that is appropriate for the group. Guest speakers or films are also used when appropriate.

C. Processing at the end of the period is spent describing what was observed about the interaction, not what was said, but HOW it was said.

D. Journals. The time set aside for this activity may be the last five minutes of the sessions. At this point, students are encouraged to write in their personal journals reactions, feelings, and observations about the day's proceedings.

PEER COUNSELING SOURCES USED AT POMONA SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

Books:

Canfield & Wells, 100 Ways to Enhance Self-Concept in the Classroom, Prentice Hall, 1976

Cromwell, Ohs, Roark & Stanford, Becoming: A Course in Human Relations, Relating and Interaction, J. P. Lippincott, 1975

Pfeiffer & Jones, ed. A Handbook of Structured Experiences for Human Relations Training. Vol. I & II, University Associates, 1973

Simon, et. al., Values Clarification, A. & W. Pubs, 1978

Audio Visual Aids:

Myrick, Erney & Sorenson, "Peer Facilitators: Youth Helping Youth.," 16mm, 27 min, Lib. of Congress No. 76-703659

There is available from Pomona Counseling Department a videotape, "Kids into Counseling Kids," 1981, 23 min., and a slide-tape presentation on our Peer Counseling Program, 1982, 10 min.

For more information please write or call: Pomona Counseling Department, 8101 W. Pomona Drive, Arvada, CO 80005 (303) 423-9092